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4 December 1967

MEMORANDUM

SUBJECT: Reporting on the Cyprus Problem

1. We did not anticipate in print that the resumption of Greek patrolling in the Ayios Theodoros area would bring on a major international crisis. Our reasoning on the Ayios Theodoros move--of which we had a couple days' advance warning in the sense that we knew the Cypriots intended to send a police patrol, that the UN was concerned, and that Ambassador Belcher was trying to head this off--was that the problem seemed a local one which all those immediately concerned were on top of. We even guessed that a simple patrol might well get away with it--as it did, the first day. We were not aware, however, of Grivas' determination to turn the situation into a major operation (as Cyprus operations go), and it now appears that Athens was not aware of this either--or else was led astray by Grivas.

2. The closest we came, timewise, to raising the flag re Greek-Turkish problems on Cyprus was in a CIB Note of 13 November which observed that the hard-nosed attitude of the Turks concerning their overflights of Greek islands probably reflected Ankara's general frustration over the Cyprus problem. On 3 November, the "preface" to the CIWR's Middle East section had noted that the capture of a Turkish

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guerrilla leader would raise tensions on the island, as it did (but Denktash was released by the Greeks and returned to Turkey just before the Ayios Theodoros business).

3. Over-all, between 1 January and 15 November, the PDB had 15 items concerned with Cyprus; the problem was treated in 4 SIG items--the most recent being 14 August; the CIB also had 14 items, but only 6 of them since 1 June; and the CIWR has made fairly regular reference to the problem, although there had been no regular or special article exclusively devoted to it before 15 November.

4. The Cyprus story this year had been dominated by new themes--the impact of the Greek coup on Athens' relations with Makarios, and the Greek junta's efforts to come up with a package that the Turks would buy. Only with the abortive Greek-Turkish talks at Evros on 9-10 September has the older theme of really venomous Greek-Turkish animosity begun to come forward again--and this was still in pretty low key until Grivas and company staged the Ayios Theodoros operations. Thanks to a "peace offensive" by Makarios, not since the incident last spring at Mari--5-10 miles down the road from Ayios Theodoros--have we felt that we needed to warn that a "new outbreak is possible" on the island (CIB of 10 April). We did note in the CIB on 28 July that intercommunal tensions were again rising, but this is pretty old-hat for Cyprus. Not that we have

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been sanguine---we have consistently warned that Makarios could and probably would sabotage any Greek-Turkish deal (e.g., SIG item of 10 July), and pointed out, after the Evros talks broke down, that no meaningful progress had been made toward a solution inasmuch as neither party was ready to offer the necessary concessions (CIB of 14 September).

5. The Cyprus problem is a classic example of the crisis situation that lingers on for years and can be brought to a furious boil by any one of a number of unpredictable incidents. In this kind of case the alerting office is reluctant to report every action that might escalate the situation. The vast majority of such actions produce nothing significant; the risk of appearing to cry wolf irresponsibly is high. OCI has tried a number of expedients in the past to overcome this problem--none has been successful. The most notorious approach was that imposed on us by General Taylor, the crisis situation weekly check list. Its principal weakness, of course, was that since it changed so little from week to week no one read it after the first month or so of its existence.

6. The weekly SIG vehicle has been used to flag chronic problems that otherwise do not merit coverage in the current publications. We would propose to expand our use of the SIG Weekly for this purpose. Items for the SIG are selected each week by the D/OCI or DD/OCI in conference with the OCI Area Chiefs. This meeting in itself provides a useful opportunity for the discussion of latent crisis situations.

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MEMORANDUM FOR: RECORD

The memo is a post-mortem on Cyprus. The original  
and six copies went to [REDACTED] for further  
dissem.

STATINTL

ICO kept a copy.

4 Dec 67/ICO

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